



THE WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION FOR MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPY

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2022 Legislative Priorities

WAMFT Supports:

[SB 5638](#) Concerning expediting approval for applicants for an associate license as a social worker, mental health counselor, or marriage and family therapist.

Prime Sponsor: Wagoner R-39

This bill gives Washington associate license applicants the ability to work as an associate (with their supervisor onsite) while waiting for their associate license to be issued. We support this bill because it addresses current behavioral health labor shortage issues, minimizes disruption of pay for associate applicants, and addresses a long-term problem where interns at a private group practice who are continuing work at that practice as an associate have to disrupt therapy with their clients while waiting for their associate license to be issued. This bill also allows the Secretary to create additional requirements by rule if the supervisor license type does not match the associate license type.

SB 5638 did not pass the Washington State legislature in the 2022 legislative session.

[SB 5995/](#)[HB1664](#) Concerning prototypical school formulas for physical, social, and emotional support in schools.

SB 5995 Prime Sponsor: Wellman D-41; HB 1664 Prime Sponsor: Rule D-42

We support the notion of increased ratios for socio-emotional support workers in schools, and that funds allocated for these workers not be used elsewhere. We would also like to see a new School-Based MFT or School-Based Mental Health Therapist job classification within schools in Washington.

SSHB 1664 passed the Washington State Legislature in 2022 and was signed into law on March 23, 2022.

[SB 5829](#) Concerning appropriations for behavioral health

Prime Sponsor: Braun R-20

We support a 7% increase in Medicaid reimbursement rates in order to retain and incentivize behavioral health workforce.

SB 5829 did not pass the Washington State legislature in the 2022 legislative session.

[HB 1890](#) Concerning the children and youth behavioral health work group

Prime Sponsor: Callan D-5

This bill creates a strategic plan advisory group under the children and youth behavioral health work group within the Health Care Authority to develop a behavioral health strategic plan for children, youth, and caregivers; adds a member, allows stipends for members with lived experience, and allows 6 meetings per year. The workgroup can invite individuals with subject matter expertise, and we would like to see a MFT on We would like MFT to be a required association for this workgroup in order to advocate for cultural attunement and systemic perspective in working with children and families. We need a MFT to apply for this workgroup! If you are interested, please email wamft@wamft.org.

HB 1890 passed the Washington State Legislature in 2022 and was signed into law on March 17, 2022.

WAMFT Concerned (Other):

[HB 2040](#) Streamlining licensing requirements for certain behavioral health professions

Prime Sponsor: Callan D-5

This bill reduces postgraduate supervision and experience hours requirements for all masters-level behavioral health professions in Washington by 50%, including for MFTs. The existing COAMFTE credit would likewise be reduced by 50%. This bill intends to address the behavioral health workforce shortage, but it is unclear how it would do so except perhaps by incentivizing more individuals to enter the profession (via reducing training requirements); at best, this will only have impacts several years out in addressing the shortage. In addition, reducing supervision requirements to this level will put us on the lower end of requirements compared with other states. Quality supervision is the backbone of our training as behavioral health professionals, and a better path would be to attract new individuals to the field by subsidizing training through avenues such as loan

forgiveness, grants, intern pay, and sustainable wages, rather than reducing/diluting training standards.

HB 2040 did not pass the Washington State legislature in the 2022 legislative session.

SB 5596 Conforming disclosure restrictions for mental health counselors, marriage and family therapists, and social workers to the requirements of the Uniform Health Care Information Act.

Prime Sponsor: Trudeau D-27

Currently, MFTs are bound by the disclosure exceptions of two separate Washington laws, RCW 70.02 et seq. and RCW 18.225.105 (the latter being more restrictive). The proposed legislation seeks to better align these two laws by expanding disclosure exceptions in RCW 18.225.105. WAMFT supports the notion of broadening disclosure exceptions for MFTs and other masters-level therapists but also wants this effort to be balanced with client autonomy over private health information and consideration be given for applicability to private practice and HIPAA alignment.

SB 5596 did not pass the Washington State legislature in the 2022 legislative session.

HB 1349 Concerning Peer Specialists

Prime Sponsor: Davis D-32

This bill has been revived in the 2022 Legislative Session. WAMFT believes that the scope of practice for peer specialists should be thoughtfully defined in order to delineate where an individual with lived experience but not Masters-level training should fit in the continuum of care.

HB 1349 did not pass the Washington State legislature in the 2022 legislative session.

HB 1865 Addressing the behavioral health workforce shortage and expanding access to peer services by creating the profession of certified peer specialists

Prime Sponsor: Davis D-32

WAMFT supports the notion of increased access to care and respects the important work peers provide for our clients but believes that the scope of practice for peer specialists should be thoughtfully defined in order to delineate where an individual with lived experience but not Masters-level training should fit in the continuum of care. WAMFT has

recommended that if this legislation is allowed to go forward, the role must be aligned with existing best practice, nested within a care team rather than provided as a standalone service, and supported by comprehensive training that includes cultural attunement, self-of-the-provider awareness, and trauma-informed care. In addition, WAMFT is advocating that policymakers adopt effective short- and long-term strategies to create greater sustainability for masters- and doctoral-level clinicians in order to retain highly credentialed behavioral health workforce.

HB 1865 did not pass the Washington State legislature in the 2022 legislative session.

[SB 5884](#) Establishing Behavioral Health Support

Prime Sponsor: Trudeau D-27

This bill requires the Department of Health to partner with the University of Washington to develop rules for the certification for behavioral health support specialists. (A behavioral health support specialist is defined as a paraprofessional trained to deliver low-intensity, evidence-based behavioral health interventions for adults with mild-to-moderate behavioral health conditions in ongoing partnership with a licensed healthcare provider). This legislation cites the [results](#) of a UK program, [Improving Access to Psychological Therapies](#), which provided stepped-down brief services with moderately promising results. While WAMFT desires to see measures to increase access to care and address workforce shortage, the paraprofessional role, if allowed to go forward, must be thoughtfully and narrowly defined due to the training differential between a paraprofessional versus a bachelor- or doctoral-level clinician. In addition, similarly to the peer specialist legislation, we urge policymakers to adopt effective short- and long-term strategies to create greater sustainability for masters- and doctoral-level clinicians in order to retain highly-credentialed behavioral health workforce.

SB 5884 did not pass the Washington State legislature in the 2022 legislative session.

Monitoring:*

[HB 1821](#) Concerning the definition of established relationship for purposes of audio-only telemedicine

Prime Sponsor: Schmick R-9

This bill defines the “established relationship” requirement for audio-only telemedicine that goes into effect on 1/1/23.

HB 1821 passed the Washington State Legislature in 2022 and was signed into law on March 30, 2022.

[HB 1182/SB 5209](#) Enhancing and expanding behavioral health and suicide prevention crisis response services

HB 1182 Prime Sponsor: Orwall D-33: SB 5209 Prime Sponsor: Dhingra D-45

WAMFT retains interest in aspects of 988 implementation having to do with cultural attunement, collaboration with law enforcement, and incorporation of peer specialists into the continuum of care.

HB 1182 & SB 5209 did not pass the Washington State legislature in the 2022 legislative session.

** Not necessarily a complete list*